

says no one ever had to guess where they stood with David. "David and I had a very close relationship," she says. "He always said, 'Mom, I know there isn't any sense in me trying to lie to you. I know you're just going to find out the truth anyway.'"

What is the truth now is that our Nation must never forget SGT David K. Cooper's service, nor can we ever forget the loss and pain caused to his family by his enormous sacrifice. I hope they will remember that this Senate is proud to honor SGT David K. Cooper for his bravery, his patriotism, and his love of country.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the second half.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Jersey.

CASTRO BROTHERS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, two weeks ago, the democratically elected leaders of the Western Hemisphere met for the Summit of the Americas. The Castro regime in Cuba was not invited, because it has violated the democratic charter of the Organization of American States for the last 5 decades.

At the same time as that meeting in Trinidad and Tobago, Raul Castro gave a speech in Venezuela. He said he would be willing to negotiate with the United States and put everything on the table. Many considered this "news."

Well, let me tell you, those comments aren't news to anyone who has followed the rhetoric of the regime over the decades. The Castros have made promise after promise and none of their promises have resulted in substantial change on the island, none of their promises have resulted in the re-

lease of the labor leaders, journalists or clergymen jailed for no crime other than speaking their minds, the end of the network of government spies on every block, or the granting of basic human rights that we in the United States take for granted. None of their promises have resulted in economic freedom for the millions of Cubans who try to get by on less than a dollar a day.

And so it was hardly news that not long after Raul Castro spoke, his older brother Fidel made comments clarifying that nothing would change, and blaming all conditions in Cuba on the United States.

He said President Obama acted with "autosuficiencia" y "superficialidad", he called him conceited and superficial.

I am surprised that Secretary Clinton, in her remarks, would jump so fast to consider that good news.

While Raul Castro spoke at a meeting in Venezuela, there was another gathering going on in Cuba. It was a gathering of state security agents and secret police, outside the home of Jorge Luis García Pérez, known as "Antúnez."

With tremendous courage, Antúnez began a hunger strike to protest the oppressive Castro regime. In response, agents descended on the house last March 17. According to Amnesty International, they have orders to use force against and arrest anyone to prevent them from entering the house, including anyone who could provide medical treatment.

Antúnez and three other Cubans have vowed to continue their protest until the torture of political prisoner Mario Alberto Pérez Aguilera, held at the Santa Clara Provincial Prison, ceases immediately.

They will continue their protest until he is taken out of a tiny solitary confinement cell, until he is no longer beaten and forced to starve, until the regime allows Antúnez' sister Caridad García Pérez to rebuild her home destroyed by the hurricanes last year, which they have not allowed, as further punishment to these activists.

From his house in Placetas, Cuba, Antúnez wrote me a letter on April 13. Here's an excerpt, in Spanish:

Compatriotas a nombre de nuestro pueblo cubano persistan en sus nobles y sinceros esfuerzos, sepan que para los cubanos la libertad, la dignidad y el respeto a los derechos humanos tienen mucho más permanencia e importancia que las ventajas económicas que puedan traer los viajes de turismo y las llegadas de insumos que financiarán más que al pueblo a la cruel tiranía que nos oprime.

He said:

Those who continue their noble and sincere efforts on behalf of the Cuban people, please know, that for Cubans, liberty, dignity and respect for human rights are much more permanent and important than the economic advantages that might come with visiting tourists and the arrival of products, which will benefit the cruel tyranny that oppresses us more than the Cuban people.

That is the kind of courage that can break a dictatorship. That is the kind

of courage we should support. And that is the kind of person whose advice we should heed, the human rights activist, the Cuban who sacrifices day and night in a peaceful struggle for freedom, these are the voices we should listen to when we are making our policy toward the Castro regime.

Some like to cling to a romantic notion of the Castros, but we cannot lose sight of these brutal facts. There is no indication that political prisoners are being released, free speech is being allowed or Cubans are being granted basic liberties that we take for granted.

For the Organization of American States to readmit a regime that engages in this type of systematic suppression of human rights, it would have to rip up its Inter-American Democratic Charter as a farce. It would have to ignore Article 78 of the declaration, reaffirming, "the legitimacy of electoral processes and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." And it would be sending a clear signal to other countries moving in the wrong direction, away from democracy, that it is perfectly OK to do so.

In respect to the very complicated choices we have on Cuba policy, President Obama has proven himself a man of action. I support his allowing Cuban-Americans more opportunities to travel to Cuba, because I think families should have the chance to be reunited.

On the other hand, and although I support finding ways to improve the financial situation of the Cuban people, I think allowing unlimited remittances was not the right move, when the Castro regime still takes for itself up to 30 percent of all the money sent.

The administration also announced changes regarding telecommunications policy. Let me be clear: in spite of the fact that the regime has rejected such gestures in the past, I hope that it will now allow U.S. telecommunications companies to increase the flow of information to and from the island. That said, we need to be sure to prevent a repeat of what happened in China, where U.S. telecommunications firms helped the Chinese government monitor Internet users and control content. U.S. companies cannot and should not censor Internet searches and block Web sites at the request of the regime.

But mainly what we have learned from these good-faith actions on the part of the United States is that they have not resulted in any change of behavior from the regime in Cuba.

We have traded concessions and gotten only rhetoric in return. We have extended our hand, while the Cuban regime maintains its iron-handed clenched fist.

We cannot allow ourselves to start down a slippery slope of relaxing restrictions, that only winds up allowing the Castro regime to strengthen the iron fist by which it rules.

The press is reporting that the State Department is looking to hold talks on migration and counternarcotics with the Castro regime.

These are serious issues. But without seeing any progress whatsoever on the part of the regime, it is hard to see why we should be looking for more opportunities to make additional concessions. It is hard to see why we should believe whatever promises the regime might make. And it is hard to see why we should cooperate on migration or counternarcotics with a Cuban navy whose main mission is patrolling for and sinking ships carrying its own fleeing citizens.

If we open up discussions now, we are essentially giving the regime a pass on progress and taking the focus off of where President Obama rightly put it, freedom on the island, freedom for political prisoners, freedom from seizures of a huge percentage of remittances sent to the Cuban people.

So, this is exactly the wrong time to start these conversations and starting them would be in direct contradiction to the White House's own statements, as recently as April 17, that put the burden where it should be, on the Castro regime.

After 50 years of brutality, we need actions, not words, on the part of the Castro regime. Mere words won't erase the lack of dignity that Antúnez is protesting with a hunger strike. Words won't stop people like Oscar Elías Biscet, a renowned doctor, from being thrown into prison for refusing to give women a drug that caused abortions.

And words won't finally allow Oswaldo Payá to see the free elections he's worked for and marched for and gone to jail for.

Last week I heard one of my distinguished colleagues speak about human rights abuses in China. I think the Senator was absolutely right to highlight those abuses. And I think we should be no less concerned with prison camps in China than prison camps in Cuba, no less concerned with Tiananmen Square than with the Primavera Negra crackdown, no less appalled at a child laborer in Beijing than in Havana.

And by now we should be convinced that economic interaction in the face of an authoritarian government will not end Cuba's human rights abuses, just as it has not ended abuses in China.

Another of my distinguished colleagues has pointed out the peaceful revolutions that ended communism in Eastern Europe, including in his ancestors' homeland of Lithuania. I share the Senator's deep respect for those revolutions. And I think it is worth pointing out that when they took place, there was international support and recognition not primarily for the businesses who wanted to open those countries up for financial gain, but for the democracy activists within those countries who risked their lives to bring change.

There is simply no excuse for the Cuban regime's behavior. Forgiving it and forgetting it is not the answer.

If we want to change the way we conduct our policy, there are many things

we can do to isolate and weaken the Castro regime, and hasten the day when the Cuban people can be free.

Let's have the U.S. offer more visitor and student visas for eligible Cubans to come to the U.S., to see and live our way of life. Having Americans travel to Cuba could never be as powerful as having Cuban youth see the greatness of our country, and its pluralistic, diverse, representative democracy. That taste of freedom would be infectious.

In return we simply seek a commitment from Cuba to accept their citizens' return, and to guarantee the issuance of exit permits for all qualified migrants.

Cuba is one of the few countries in the world that will not permit its citizens to travel even when they have a legitimate visa to do so. And, when they give them license to leave, they must pay to do so. I find it ironic that when people mention the U.S. embargo, they fail to mention the Castros' blockade on their own people, a blockade that keeps Cubans not only from leaving Cuba, but from moving freely within their own country.

If we want to facilitate the sales of food to Cuba, let us insist that they be sold in open markets, available to all Cubans, without it being part of Castro's food rationing plan, a plan meant to further control the Cuban people.

In exchange for cooperation with Cuba on narcotics trafficking, let them hand over the 200 fugitives the FBI knows are in Cuba, including JoAnne Chesimard, the convicted killer of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster.

And in exchange for freeing commerce, let the Castros free the political prisoners they hold and allow them to speak freely, organize freely, elect their own leadership and freely practice their religion on Cuban soil. I hope we are not so blinded by the color of money that we forget how important it is for the Castros to close their dungeons and let the light of freedom shine down on everyone who calls the island home.

President Obama, who saw repression in Indonesia when he was a child, promised us this: He said:

My policy toward Cuba will be guided by one word: Libertad. And the road to freedom for all Cubans must begin with justice for Cuba's political prisoners, the rights of free speech, a free press and freedom of assembly; and it must lead to elections that are free and fair.

For 50 years, the regime has been a social, economic and moral failure. It has succeeded merely at staying in power. Today, after the regime has offered few new words and fewer new actions, we can choose to change how we feel about the regime, or we can try to change the way it operates. That is our choice.

We can choose amnesia or we can choose justice. We can choose strong words or we can choose strong actions. We can choose giving in to the commercial interests of a few, or we can choose holding on to the moral interests that unite us all.

That is what I hope we will do. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). The Senator from New York.

SAFE BABY PRODUCTS ACT

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to speak about an issue that is very close to my heart. I am a mom. I have two young boys at home. Like all parents, I have faith and confidence that the products I use on my children—bath products, lotions, and soaps—are safe. But a new study was recently released by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics revealing that widely used baby products, such as shampoos and baby lotions, contain probable carcinogens and other irritants, in particular formaldehyde and dioxane 1,4.

Like many other moms in New York, when I read this list of potentially dangerous products, I immediately began to worry about my children. I have two boys—Henry who is 11 months old and Theodore who is 5 years old. When I read this list of products, I noticed many of them are literally in my bathroom, and I have used them on my children since they were born. I was immediately very concerned. I began to think about what I could do to make a difference. The bottom line is, I, like all parents in America, need to know the facts about these products.

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics commissioned an independent laboratory study to test 48 products for 1,4-dioxane, and 28 of those products were also tested for formaldehyde. The lab found that 61 percent contained both of those chemicals. Eighty-two percent contained formaldehyde from a level of 54 to 610 parts per million, and 67 percent contained 1,4-dioxane at levels up to 35 parts per million. The report says these chemicals are both probable carcinogens and irritants and have been known to cause cancer in animals.

The FDA, however, has not established a safe level for these chemicals in cosmetics, and these chemicals are currently not listed as ingredients because they are byproducts of the processing and manufacturing.

To me, this situation is unacceptable. Parents have the right to know whether the products they use on their children are safe. While a single product may not be cause for concern, the reality is, babies may be exposed to many products, several times a week. Children are particularly susceptible. Their skin is much finer, much thinner, so they can absorb contaminants more easily. They tend to breathe more quickly than adults, meaning their exposure to inhalation of some of these chemicals can be more considerable. We need to make sure the combination of these products is not causing harm to our youngest. Parents need to know if there are any risks in the products they trust. Parents have a right to know, and the government has a responsibility to make sure these products are safe.